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Chairman: Mr. Wenaweser ..... (Liechtenstein)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 102: Advancement of women (A/57/3, A/57/38 (Part I), A/57/125, A/57/129-E/2002/77, A/57/169, A/57/170, A/57/171, A/57/330 and Add.1, A/57/406, A/57/432, A/57/447)

Agenda item 103: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" (A/57/3, A/57/286)

1. **Ms. Hannan** (Director, Division for the Advancement of Women), referring to agenda item 103, said that, over the preceding year, a number of international conferences and meetings had addressed issues relating to women and the promotion of gender equality, building on the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. It was important to link gender equality with other goals, such as poverty eradication, sustainable development and the well-being of children and older persons. As a result, those international events had considered, inter alia, social protection and social security systems designed to prevent poverty among older women, the elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, equal access to economic resources, including land and credit, and the importance of taking account of gender perspectives in national budget processes. However, although participants had made a firmer commitment to gender equality, that commitment was more pronounced in the social field than in the economic one.

2. Equality should be an integral part of efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. As the Secretary-General had pointed out, the first big test of Member States' commitment would come in 2005, by which time parity in primary and secondary schools should have become a reality. That goal was unlikely to be met, and insufficient progress in that area reduced the potential to achieve gender equality, the empowerment of women, the eradication of poverty and sustainable development.

3. Many United Nations entities had made use of gender mainstreaming as a key strategy for promoting gender equality. An information kit highlighting examples of such action had been prepared. An update on the activities of those entities would be submitted to the next session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2003. As part of its multi-year programme of work, the Commission would consider women's human rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls. Three reports of the Secretary-General (A/57/169, 170 and 171) provided information about important steps taken by Governments, the United Nations system and other intergovernmental or regional bodies to prevent those forms of violence and to provide effective remedies. The criminal justice system, human rights institutions and mechanisms, social service providers, the legislature and all other relevant partners should make specific efforts to achieve that goal.

4. For many years, the Third and the Fifth Committees had taken a particular interest in the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat and were now extending their efforts to encompass the United Nations system as a whole. Progress was continuing: women now occupied 41 per cent of posts subject to geographical distribution in the Secretariat and accounted for 35 per cent of the population of Professional staff with appointments of one year or more, an increase of 0.4 per cent since 2001. The General Assembly had asked the Secretary-General to ensure that the appointment and promotion of suitably qualified women was not less than 50 per cent of all appointments and promotions until the goal of gender equality was achieved, which was now the case in four departments and offices. In the United Nations system as a whole, there had been an increase of 0.2 per cent, bringing the number of women in Professional posts to 33.7 per cent in December 2000. Nevertheless, further efforts were needed to ensure that women were appointed at higher levels and promoted.

5. Introducing the report of the Working Group on the future operations of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) (A/57/330), she said that the Group had presented a recommendation to the General Assembly in accordance with the mandate conferred upon it by resolution 56/125. The Institute was still suffering from a shortage of resources. Voluntary contributions received as of 31 August 2002 had amounted to $23,496; the amount of $500,000 would provide funding for one additional Director and three additional Professional posts, but would not be sufficient to

finance the Institute's research and training activities. As the Secretary-General had pointed out in his note on the situation of INSTRAW (A/57/129-E/2002/77), despite the Institute's efforts to implement its modest but relevant work programme and the efforts of the Secretariat to support it, the financial and institutional difficulties affecting the Institute persisted. However, if it had the necessary human and financial resources commensurate with its mandate, it could make a valuable and substantial contribution to the advancement of women.

6. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) had invited the Secretary-General to carry out a study on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peace-building and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution. The study had been overseen by the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, in close cooperation with the Inter-Agency Task Force on Women, Peace and Security. The Secretary-General would be submitting a report, based on the results of that study, to the Security Council.

7. **Ms. Butchey** (Interim Manager/Director of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)) paid tribute to the Working Group on the Future Operations of the Institute for its work and thanked the General Assembly for providing the resources needed for the implementation of the Institute's work programme for 2002. Through the Gender Awareness and Networking System (GAINS), the Institute was positioning itself as a global gateway and clearing house through which the gender research and training community was channelling its knowledge, concerns and experience to the United Nations system as well as to the wider international community. Documents were now available in English, French and Spanish on the Institute's web site.

8. INSTRAW had addressed a number of priority issues identified by the United Nations legislative bodies and the international community, including those related to women and ageing, and it had organized several meetings and produced a number of publications on ageing. The Institute had published 200 documents in its three working languages for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. During the Summit, it had organized a discussion forum on gender aspects of environmental management and sustainable development. The recommendations that had come out of that discussion had been included in a research report on emerging issues and research gaps in gender and sustainable development.

9. In anticipation of future themes of the Committee on the Status of Women and the forthcoming World Summit on the Information Society to be held in 2003 and 2005, INSTRAW had addressed the gendered aspects of access and use of information and communication technologies and the impact of such technologies on women's empowerment. A synthesis paper would be prepared for Summit participants. In a follow-up to its research programme on men's roles in ending gender-based violence, the Institute had published a collection of working papers from various regions of the world. A new research programme would address the role of men in women's reproductive health, with particular emphasis on HIV/AIDS prevention. The Institute planned to implement in 2003 a policy aimed at improving men's involvement in safeguarding women's reproductive health. Finally, the Institute was currently conducting an in-depth study of the gender disparities identified within the framework of the financing for development process and highlighted in the Monterrey Consensus.

10. Pending the availability of resources, INSTRAW would implement research and training activities in the following areas: gender and information and communication technologies; men's roles in women's reproductive health; and gender aspects of conflict and conflict prevention.

11. **Ms. Kislinger** (Venezuela) said that, regardless of the institutional arrangements chosen, the Institute's financial difficulties would continue. There was no contradiction between what the Secretariat said in that regard and the recommendation of the Working Group. The Institute needed both financial and institutional stability. The amount of contributions recommended by the Working Group should be sufficient to fund a director's post and three additional administrator posts, but not the core activities of the Institute, although that should be the purpose of voluntary contributions. Her delegation reserved the right to revisit that issue.

12. **Ms. Durán** (Spain) said that she endorsed the statement by the representative of Venezuela concerning the work of the Working Group. Her delegation respected the view of the Secretariat but believed that it was the responsibility of Member States

to take decisions and make recommendations as a follow-up to those put forward by the Working Group. Her delegation reserved the right to take the floor again on that issue.

13. **Ms. Hannan** (Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women), speaking on behalf of the Secretariat, confirmed the fact that the issue of resources was critical.

14. **Ms. Butchey** (Interim Manager/Director of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women) said that the Institute, which took the recommendations of the Working Group very seriously, needed adequate resources in order to carry out its activities, even with fewer staff.

15. **Ms. Abaka** (Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) said that 170 States were currently parties to the Convention. Forty-four of those States were parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention and 75 others had signed it. Only one State had opted out of the inquiry procedure provided for by article 8 of the Protocol. Thirty-five States parties to the Convention had accepted the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention.

16. In 2002, the Committee had considered the reports of States parties and adopted its concluding comments on the implementation of the Convention in those States. At its twenty-sixth session, it had adopted a statement of solidarity with Afghan women and two statements as the Committee's inputs to the Preparatory Committees for the Second World Assembly on Ageing and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. At its twenty-seventh session, the Committee had held its first informal meeting with States parties to the Convention. The discussions had focused on national seminars and other possibilities open to members delegated by the Committee to exchange views with all the partners concerned, including the judiciary. The collective responsibility of States parties for the effective implementation of the Convention had also been addressed.

17. By its decision 23/II, the Committee had called on States parties to consolidate all outstanding reports in one document. During the year, the Committee had considered ways of streamlining its working methods and had published a report on that issue at the end of the seminar that it had held from 22 to 24 April 2002 at the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law at Lund, Sweden. The format for the presentation of the concluding comments of the Committee had been modified and a strategy had been devised to encourage reporting by States parties. Initial reports should not exceed 100 pages while periodic reports should be no longer than 75 pages (see A/57/38).

18. The Committee had adopted the rules of procedure for the Optional Protocol to the Convention in January 2001 and had established an electronic database thereon in cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

19. Members of the Committee participated in the technical assistance activities organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women and other United Nations bodies. In recent months, they had been involved in such activities in Albania, Kosovo, Tajikistan, South-East Asia and the northern Pacific. In 1999 the Division for the Advancement of Women had organized a symposium on the application of the Convention by judges and, in November 2002, it would organize in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific a similar meeting in which members of the Committee would participate.

20. **Ms. Løj** (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey, said that 2002 had been marked by a number of major conferences of significance for the advancement of women, inter alia, the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. She added that the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals had set targets in the economic, social and environmental fields.

21. As the Millennium Declaration had stated, gender equality was essential to the realization of social and people-centred sustainable development and that gender inequality was a major obstacle to poverty eradication. She supported women's empowerment through the implementation of policies and programmes designed to develop their skills, capacities and opportunities, thereby enabling them to contribute to the economic and social development of societies. Women should participate in decision- and policy-making, which were critical tools for ensuring their advancement and gender equality.

22. The European Union paid particular attention to the situation of women and girls in armed conflict and welcomed the positive results of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). However, much remained to be done to ensure that women were represented at all levels of decision-making in the areas of conflict prevention, management and resolution. The appointment of a female Special Representative of the Secretary-General to head the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia was encouraging. The issue of gender equality should be incorporated in all mandates for peacekeeping operations, and personnel assigned to those operations should have a strong gender competence.

23. The Commission on the Status of Women played a catalytic role in the follow-up to the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action. That role must be strengthened through further improvement of the Commission's working methods.

24. The European Union welcomed the efforts of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and urged States to accept the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention, which would enable the Committee to enjoy greater flexibility and would facilitate the consideration of the numerous reports submitted by States parties.

25. Violence against women was a crime and a major obstacle to achieving gender equality. It violated women's human rights and prevented their enjoyment. Governments must, therefore, step up their efforts in order to prevent and eliminate that phenomenon through the application of relevant legislative and political measures. They should prosecute and punish perpetrators and ensure that female victims of violence had access to appropriate support services. That obligation also applied to domestic situations, including marital rape and all forms of violence falling within the category of customary or traditional practices. The European Union welcomed the Plan of Action adopted at the special session of the General Assembly on children with a view to putting an end to such practices as early and forced marriages and female genital mutilation. It also welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on working towards the elimination of crimes against women committed in the name of honour (A/57/169) and fully endorsed his conclusions with regard to the need to penalize those crimes. It paid tribute to the work of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

26. The European Union condemned trafficking in human beings for the purposes of sexual or economic exploitation. Given the numerous and varied causes of the problem, cross-border cooperation must be established and a multidisciplinary approach adopted to combat it. The objective was not only to convict traffickers and their accomplices, but also to put an end to trafficking and assist victims. Consequently, the European Union urged States to sign and ratify the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementary Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

27. With regard to health care, inequality and poverty prevented women and children from benefiting from high-quality physical and mental health care. Therefore, efforts must be intensified to achieve universal access to basic health care and protection against HIV/AIDS, which was affecting increasing numbers of women and girls. The European Union took the view that women's human rights included the right to have control over their sexuality.

28. In that connection, the European Union underlined the importance that it attached to the activities of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which made a major contribution to solving problems linked to population growth and reproductive medicine in developing countries. UNFPA should continue to receive support in its efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those related to combating HIV/AIDS and maternal and infant mortality.

29. The European Union wished to emphasize the paramount role of education in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. It also encouraged Governments to support the work of civil society and non-governmental organizations.

30. Experience had shown that it was crucial to establish strong national machinery to achieve gender equality, particularly in the areas of women's access to the job market, equal pay for work of equal value, pensions and the fight against sexual harassment in the workplace.

31. She recalled that gender equality was one of the fundamental values of the European Union, as laid down in the Treaty of Amsterdam and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

32. **Mr. Stagno** (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Rio Group, said that the Group was prepared to continue action to meet the commitments undertaken since the Fourth World Conference on Women and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The Regional Conference on Women of Latin America and the Caribbean had devoted itself to follow-up agreements in the region, with a view to continuing to contribute actively to the work of the United Nations.

33. At the latest summit, held in April 2002 in San José, the heads of State and Government of the Rio Group had renewed their devotion to the universal validity of human rights and reiterated their commitment to the promotion and protection of the economic, social and cultural rights of their peoples.

34. As poverty jeopardized fundamental human rights, they had agreed to continue focusing public policies on strengthening the individual capabilities of each member of the family group and on implementing strategies to combat poverty and its marginalizing effects.

35. Education was the best way to ensure greater equality of opportunity and to compensate for social inequality, hence they had agreed to facilitate access to and quality of education by intensifying investment in the education sector.

36. He reaffirmed the need to incorporate the gender perspective in the design and implementation of policies and in efforts to attain economic and social development and to eradicate poverty. To that end, it was necessary to broaden the exchange of experiences, information and programmes, attaching due value to the role of women in all areas. The Group committed itself to the promotion of programmes in support of adolescent mothers to help integrate them into the educational system and to improve both their and their children's opportunities for individual and social development.

37. The AIDS pandemic, which had implications for the economy, development and human rights, threatened decades of hard-earned progress and stretched beyond the means and capabilities of the nations affected, had become an urgent matter for foreign policy.

38. As in previous years, the Rio Group expressed its support for the preservation, reorganization and renewal of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

39. **Ms. Zhang** (China) said that, in March 2002, the Commission on the Status of Women had held in-depth discussions on poverty eradication and environmental management, in particular mitigation of natural disasters, which were fundamental aspects of sustainable development and areas in which women played an irreplaceable role. Her delegation supported the adoption of the agreed conclusions.

40. She was pleased to note that the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in 2002, had placed emphasis on gender equality, poverty eradication for women and the role of women in economic and social sectors; she hoped that the international community would make concerted efforts to achieve the goals set forth in the Millennium Declaration, Monterrey Consensus and Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development.

41. The international community should enhance legal systems to prevent and prohibit all forms of violence and crimes against women. Her delegation supported the conclusions and proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report on trafficking in women and girls (A/57/170).

42. Over the years, her Government had attached great importance to the protection of women's personal freedom and health. It had spared no effort to protect women's rights by combating rape, trafficking in or violence against women and bringing to justice those who had seriously violated their rights; remarkable progress had thus been achieved. At the same time it had set up an effective management system integrating prosecution, prevention and education in order to tackle the root causes of the problem.

43. China, a developing country with a population of 1.3 billion, half of which women accounted for, had in May 2001 adopted "Guidelines for the Development of Chinese Women 2001-2010", which established a comprehensive programme for the development of Chinese women and set out clear-cut measures and

targets for women's participation in politics, employment, education, health and poverty alleviation.

44. **Ms. Fusano** (Japan) said that, because the advancement of women was a cross-cutting issue, gender issues had recently been discussed not only in the Third Committee and the Commission on the Status of Women, but also in the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and at high-level international conferences such as the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. She welcomed the trend in the United Nations and other international forums towards mainstreaming the gender perspective and commended the efforts of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women.

45. Her Government believed that real gender equality would be achieved only when societies were developed in which individuals, regardless of their sex, could fully demonstrate their abilities and personalities and pursue their ideal lifestyles. It had taken a range of measures to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the outcome documents of "Beijing+5", in particular three strategies.

46. The first strategy was to empower women by enabling them to draw on their potential, strengthening their capacities and providing them with access to education. As announced in the Koizumi Initiative on the eve of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Japan believed in the importance of human resources development for sustainable development. It had committed itself to providing more than 250 billion yen (some $2 billion) in education assistance for low-income countries over the following five years. It therefore welcomed the international commitment made at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, in accordance with the conclusions of the forty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

47. Secondly, at the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan, the Japanese Government had announced that women would be one of the six focuses of its assistance programme. In February 2002, it had set up the Advisory Council on Assistance to Women in Afghanistan, composed of experts and under the supervision of the Chief Cabinet Secretary. On the advice of the Council, the Japanese Government had sent experts to the Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs (A/57/286, para. 45), invited the Minister of Women's Affairs to visit Japan and would soon be providing training for members of that Ministry. Japan had also implemented assistance programmes for Afghan women, particularly in the areas of maternal and infant health. Furthermore, in order to facilitate social rehabilitation and capacity-building for women who had been repatriated or displaced in Afghanistan, Japan was considering funding a project set up by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), through the Trust Fund for Human Security, to set up eight community centres for women. To meet the needs of women affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, Japan had allocated, also through the UNIFEM Trust Fund, US$ 3 million to support projects to combat HIV/AIDS in Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America. It had taken special measures at the national and the international levels to combat violence against women. At the national level, the Law for the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims had entered into force in April 2002 and, by August 2002, 777 protection orders had been issued. The Gender Equality Bureau had also actively supported the application of that law and raised public awareness through campaigns and seminars. At the international level, Japan had continued to support the UNIFEM Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence Against Women, and hoped that other donors would contribute to the Fund so that more projects could be implemented.

48. The third strategy was to promote women's participation in the decision-making process, particularly in the public sector. In accordance with the guidelines published in June 2001, each ministry had drawn up a plan designed to promote the appointment and promotion of female civil servants. Thanks to those efforts, the number of women involved in decision-making had been increasing steadily in all Japan's legislative, administrative and judicial bodies. However, more efforts were needed in the business sector, which was lagging behind in that area.

49. **Mr. Coimbra** (Brazil) said that he wished to associate himself with the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Rio Group. He drew attention to the major initiatives taken

by Brazil over the preceding year to advance women at all levels and in all fields.

50. Brazil was fully committed to implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. One of the most significant achievements in that regard was the creation, in May 2002, of the Secretariat of State for the Rights of Women. The basic goal of that office was to reintegrate women through providing them with greater access to political life and the job market. The Secretariat of State was supported by the National Council on the Rights of Women, a body composed of government and civil society representatives which ensured that women's issues were monitored and provided guidelines.

51. He drew attention to the imminent entry into force, in January 2003, of the new Civil Code, which would lead to far-reaching reforms such as the recognition of equality between husband and wife and the suppression of the "father's prerogative", which was to be replaced by the "family's prerogative".

52. Furthermore, Brazil was continuing to give priority to the implementation of strategies to combat poverty, particularly those which focused on the female population. For example, various initiatives had been taken to care for the children of women workers and efforts were being made to determine the impact of public policies on the elimination of discriminatory practices. In addition, campaigns had been launched to raise women's awareness of their rights in the areas of employment and justice, and the National Council on the Rights of Women was ensuring that such initiatives were monitored.

53. The new national programme on human rights, which had been issued on 13 May 2002, promoted gender equality in all areas, the incorporation of sex education into school curricula, the raising of awareness regarding sexist practices and the expansion of educational opportunities for the children of women workers.

54. To support the public measures and action being taken to combat violence against women, Brazil had set up shelters for female victims of domestic violence and had launched information campaigns. The Government had adopted a series of innovative, far-reaching strategies, inter alia, the national programme to combat and prevent domestic and sexual violence against women and the community pact against domestic violence, which were based on a partnership between the Secretariat of State for Human Rights, the United Nations system and Brazilian civil society; more than three million individuals had already benefited from the national programme, which also targeted male perpetrators of violent acts.

55. He welcomed the General Assembly debate, particularly concerning the extremely serious issues of trafficking in and violence against women. That debate, in which the Brazilian delegation had taken an active part, was essential, and he was confident that it would promote the adoption of constructive decisions which would feed into the work of the forty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status on Women, to be held in March 2003.

56. Recalling that the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had entered into force in Brazil on 28 June 2002, he said that his Government would soon be submitting a detailed national report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, thereby demonstrating its commitment to one of the pillars of the structure built by the international community to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

57. **Ms. Fahmy** (Egypt), stressing that her Government was determined to support activities for the advancement of women, said that Egypt accorded special attention to the status of women in its development plans and projects. In that regard, she noted the progress achieved in recent years to safeguard the rights of women, including the adoption of a law that allowed women to divorce their husbands or to be separated from them.

58. Another example of progress was the establishment, in 2000, of the National Council for Women, which was made up of 30 eminent persons representing a variety of disciplines and sectors. Apart from working for the advancement of women at the national level, including through the proposal of public policies, the Council represented Egypt in international forums and organizations dealing with women's issues. The Council had also contributed to the establishment of a documentation centre, which collected information on gatherings such as conferences and symposia on women. Lastly, the Council stressed the importance of implementing the Beijing Platform for Action in all areas.

59. Among other initiatives in support of women, Egypt had hosted in September 2002 at Sharm El-Sheikh a conference on the topic "The international women's movement for peace". It had been attended by many eminent persons and had focused on preparations for the 2004 conference on women and peace. Moreover, the holding in November 2001 of an Arab women's summit and the observance of 2001 as the Year of Arab Women were all part of the efforts to promote the advancement of women.

60. Gender parity had to be taken into account in drawing up socio-economic plans, since poverty was the main obstacle to development, especially in the least developed countries. Priority should be given to women in development programmes, since their development had a positive impact on society.

61. She hailed the steps described in the reports of the Secretary-General concerning the elimination of all forms of violence against women (A/57/171), trafficking in women and girls (A/57/170) and working towards the elimination of crimes of honour committed against women (A/57/169), and expressed the hope that subsequent reports would provide detailed information on the extent of those phenomena, their root causes and consequences.

62. She welcomed the report of the Working Group on the future operations of INSTRAW (A/57/330), which stressed the need to revitalize the Institute, and endorsed the Working Group's recommendation concerning the new methods for financing the Institute.

63. **Ms. González Fraga** (Cuba), noting that women suffered from discrimination throughout the world, said that the situation of women was more difficult in developing countries as a result of poverty, malnutrition, the lack of health care, illiteracy and many other factors that militated against really basic rights — the right to life and the right to development.

64. That state of affairs was caused by the external debt, the structural adjustment programmes imposed by the International Monetary Fund, globalization, trade imbalances and, generally speaking, an exclusive, unfair and unsustainable international order that made women particularly vulnerable.

65. For example, women accounted for 70 per cent of the world's 2 billion poor and two thirds of the more than 860 million illiterate adults. It was estimated that about twice as many girls as boys, more than 81 million, did not have access to primary education. That was compounded by the fact that women had the onerous duty of raising many children in utter destitution. More than 500,000 women died as a result of pregnancy while 100,000 of them died from illegal abortions and the chances of female mortality were 180 times higher in Africa than in Europe. In countries of the South, women and girls were not given any social or economic recognition for the household chores that they performed, and they were subjected to all kinds of violence, a phenomenon that was on the rise in the rich countries.

66. There was also discrimination against women in the developed countries, where women were considered commercial objects. Affirmative action programmes were not enough to ensure equality of opportunities, and migrant women were doubly marginalized. The news media propagated negative stereotypes; on the average, the number of women in political or administrative positions was only 20 to 30 per cent. Women also had limited access to cutting edge technology sectors.

67. The Cuban Government wished to reaffirm that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action must serve as guidelines for the promotion of gender parity at the international level. Implementation of the agreed strategies was a major challenge for the United Nations system, women's organizations and especially Governments. Despite the hopes generated by the end of the cold war, the arms industry continued to absorb resources while trade continued to squander them.

68. National initiatives, especially in developing countries, implied the establishment of a new climate of international trust which could only be created by the establishment of a new world economic order, which in turn implied the elimination of all forms of discrimination, progress, greater respect for the sovereignty, independence and self-determination of peoples and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. In the absence of a firm political will to distribute current international resources equitably, the agreements reached at the Beijing Conference would not be implemented.

69. While her delegation reaffirmed its support for and welcomed the work of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, it deplored the fact that very few Latin

American countries were represented on the Committee.

70. In Cuba, women were well represented in all sectors, and the country had recorded its lowest infant mortality rate in 2001 (6.2 for 1,000 live births), while women's life expectancy had risen to 78.2 years.

71. Cuban women were at the heart of the economic and social development process because they had not only benefited from the reforms undertaken in different sectors such as health, education and legislation, but had also seized the opportunities offered them in education and employment. All those achievements had come about despite the difficulties stemming from the economic embargo imposed by the United States of America on the Cuban people for more than 40 years and tightened recently by extraterritorial laws that were contrary to international law and to the Charter of the United Nations.

72. Her Government had taken a number of measures to follow up on the decisions taken by the Fourth World Conference on Women. In February 2002, Cuba had organized the second national seminar to evaluate its national plan; it had reviewed the successes and problems in implementing the 90 measures on employment and women's access to decision-making in many areas. The Federation of Cuban Women, in collaboration with UNICEF, had also taken steps in 2002 to raise women's awareness of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to better inform them about their rights.

73. **Ms. Hole** (Norway) emphasized the enormous efforts still required to reach the objective of gender equality and the need to keep up the momentum of the Fourth World Conference on Women. Her country recommended a close and continued dialogue between grass-roots organizations and national authorities.

74. Norway strongly supported the Secretary-General's work for the effective implementation of the Millennium Declaration, and was committed to taking its share of the responsibility to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Although her delegation was pleased to note the progress being made, the gender imbalances described in the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/447) should not be overlooked. Political will was the key to success in that regard: 170 Member States were parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, yet many had made reservations that were incompatible with the object and purpose of the Convention. Echoing an earlier statement by the European Union, Norway urged States to withdraw such reservations, and called on all Member States that had not yet ratified the Convention or the Optional Protocol to do so.

75. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security was a landmark event and an instrument for ensuring full participation of women at all levels of decision-making and in implementing peace processes. Her Government eagerly awaited the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council with recommendations for future action.

76. In the context of armed conflict, she referred to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court that defined sexual violence in conflict situations as crimes against humanity. The entry into force of the Statute on 1 July 2002 had been a historic turning point for the development of international law.

77. Norway considered that the problem of trafficking in women and girls should be tackled from the point of view of demand, and welcomed the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/170). Her Government was developing a national plan of action to combat trafficking in women, which would be ready by the end of 2002, and supported the Nordic-Baltic Campaign against Trafficking in Women. Norway was also actively working towards ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and urged all Member States to work for the early entry into force of those instruments.

78. Norway supported the findings of the Secretary-General in his report on working towards the elimination of crimes against women committed in the name of honour (A/57/169); her country particularly agreed with the conclusion that all such violence should be criminalized.

79. Norway was pleased that the International Conference on Financing for Development had affirmed the need for mainstreaming a gender perspective into development policies. Her country was also glad that the needs of the girl child had been recognized throughout the final outcome document of the special session of the General Assembly on

children. However, her Government would have liked to see a stronger commitment with regard to reproductive health and children's rights, and strongly urged all Member States to include youth representatives in all consultations on such issues and to mainstream gender in youth policies.

80. Her delegation also regretted the limited results achieved regarding reproductive rights and the equal right to land at the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

81. **Ms. Sauerbrey** (United States of America) stated that fundamental women's rights were an important part of United States foreign policy; upholding them was consistent with a civil, law-abiding society that was a foundation of true democracy.

82. Firstly, women should be empowered through access to education, which was their only means to escape from poverty and take part in decision-making processes. Education contributed to all aspects of development, and enabled women to improve the living conditions of themselves and their children, particularly in terms of health.

83. Secondly, it was essential for women to have access to economic opportunity, in the interests of both their family and their country. The United States Government encouraged micro-enterprises and micro-credit, and USAID was now assisting over 700 micro-enterprises worldwide, with 60 per cent of beneficiaries being women.

84. Thirdly, the use of information and communications technologies and the media helped to strengthen women's economic situations. The United States was looking forward to discussing that theme at the forty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, and supported increased use of those media to advance the status of women, particularly in developing countries.

85. Fourthly, women had to be able to participate meaningfully and effectively in decision-making processes because they were as much the key to successful peace agreements as they were victims in conflict situations, as highlighted in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Hence United States support for women's participation in all activities aimed at assisting or protecting women, from design to implementation of a programme in conflict and post-conflict situations. The missions in Timor-Leste, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo were examples of initiatives taken by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to include women in the constitutional reform process. In Afghanistan, women were playing an increasingly important role, despite the consequences of the terrible conflict from which that country was emerging.

86. Women also needed to be able to take decisions concerning the environment, given that it was often they who managed natural resources. Women and children were also the most severely affected by natural disasters and accidents resulting from the 70 million landmines across the world.

87 Although there were an increasing number of women in politics, economics and the legal profession, certain ongoing problems could only be alleviated through the coordinated efforts of the international community. The main problem was violence in all its forms, from trafficking in persons and rape, to female genital mutilation and honour crimes. Such issues were more human rights issues than merely women's issues, and would be discussed at the forty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

88. The United States commended the Secretary-General for his report (A/57/170) concerning trafficking in women and girls, but observed that the paper failed to mention her country's efforts to combat trafficking. She gave the example of United States legislation to enhance criminal penalties and give new protection to victims, and a federal inter-agency task force to investigate and prosecute trafficking.

89. With regard to the plight of women in areas of conflict, she referred to several of her country's initiatives in Afghanistan and Africa. Within the Commission on the Status of Women, the United States had often condemned human rights violations against women in Afghanistan. Since October 2001, the United States had provided nearly US$ 450 million for relief and reconstruction in Afghanistan, not to mention the specific initiatives for women, children and refugees and many other development activities. Her country had also supported health projects on maternal and child health needs, and ensured that teacher training and teaching materials reached female teachers, students and schools. In January 2002, the President of the United States and the then Chairman of the Afghan Interim Authority had established the United States-Afghan Women's Council to promote partnerships

between the public and private sectors with a view to providing Afghan women with the training they needed to rebuild their country. It should also be pointed out that the United States was committed to similar efforts throughout the world.

90. **Mr. Mamdouhi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the promotion of gender equality, emphasized in the Millennium Declaration, should be an integral part of all government policies. Governments and all their institutions must intensify their efforts in support of local and community initiatives. That could be done if the outcomes of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the recent relevant United Nations conferences were implemented with diligence and vigour.

91. Among the crucial challenges was that of actively mainstreaming a gender perspective into policies, programmes and decision-making processes at the national, regional and international levels. The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development had highlighted women's issues, concerns and expectations which required special attention. Since the 1992 adoption of Agenda 21, the international community more clearly understood the gender dimensions of various aspects of environmental matters and sustainable development, particularly in the context of poverty.

92. At the national level, incorporation of a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the Iranian Government had become a priority of the agenda for the advancement of Iranian women, which was designed to safeguard women's rights and interests and promote their empowerment through participation in national development. The Centre for Women's Participation had proposed many guidelines for reforming administrative structures, production, investment, social security and employment policy.

93. The adoption of legislative and practical measures had increased women's participation in political, social and economic affairs. The Government had submitted to Parliament a bill for accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

94. The Centre for Women's Participation was examining the plan to reform the legal and judicial system in order to take women's needs into account; current legislation was being studied and civil law reviewed in order to remove the causes of violence and discrimination against women. In its effort to promote women's rights, the Iranian Government attached particular importance to the involvement of civil society, especially non-governmental organizations; the number of women's non-governmental organizations had risen from 67 in 1997 to 248 in 2001.

95. **Ms. Al Ali** (United Arab Emirates) said that, notwithstanding the efforts put forth by the United Nations, the Security Council's attention to the issue of women and armed conflicts, and the gender mainstreaming of all United Nations programmes and policies, millions of women still experienced hunger, disease and all forms of violence and humiliation. The advancement of women could not be achieved without eliminating the causes leading to the deterioration of women's status in developing and poor countries, including poverty, foreign occupation, ethnic conflict and civil war. The international community should therefore be fully conscious of its responsibilities towards the developing and least developed countries and people living under occupation, who suffered all forms of coercion and deprivation and were stripped of the minimum standard of human dignity, as was the case in Palestine. She urged the advanced countries and international development institutions to implement the recommendations and resolutions adopted at international development conferences with regard to the provision of financial assistance and access to modern technology so that developing countries could build their economies and improve their living conditions.

96. Pursuant to its Constitution, which established the equal rights of men and women, the United Arab Emirates had enacted a number of laws to guarantee women's legitimate rights and protect them from various forms of exploitation and violence; trafficking in women was a crime punishable by law. Free education was provided at all levels and the rate of women's illiteracy had fallen to less than 10 per cent; 57 per cent of the nation's university students were women. Her Government hoped to achieve the total elimination of illiteracy by 2005; it also provided free medical services with a focus on the care of mothers and children. Women accounted for 47 per cent of government employees and held key posts in various ministries. All professions and careers were open to them, including in the world of business. The General Women's Union implemented development and educational programmes and provided economic and

social assistance to women, children and the family in general. It had also participated in the various international women's conferences held since 1975.

97. Lastly, her Government extended financial and moral support to women in neighbouring countries in times of hardship and national disaster and, in particular, to Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territories.

98. **Ms. Boiko** (Ukraine) said that in promoting the implementation of the objectives of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, the President of Ukraine had issued a decree on the advancement of the social status of women in Ukraine, aimed at creating equal opportunities in political and social life. A national plan of action, based on the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly had also been adopted. Much remained to be done in increasing the participation of women at high levels of decision-making, ensuring equal opportunity in the labour market, improving reproductive health, which had seriously deteriorated after the Chernobyl accident, and preventing violence and trafficking in women. In that regard, the Ukrainian Parliament had adopted a law in 2002 on the prevention of violence in the family and established crisis centres for women and children. Ukraine would be interested in receiving relevant assistance from the UNIFEM Trust Fund. In order to combat sexual exploitation and trafficking in women, which had remained among the worst forms of violence against women over the past decade, the Ukrainian Parliament had adopted a number of legislative measures, including amendments to the Criminal Code, which would provide tougher penalties for trafficking in human beings. Ukraine had become the third European country to introduce criminal responsibility for such crimes.

99. In May 2002, the Government had adopted a comprehensive programme against human trafficking for the period 2002-2005, which had been developed in cooperation with international and non-governmental organizations and aimed at preventing the export of women abroad for sexual and other forms of exploitation. The multidimensional nature of the problem required an integrated approach taking into account socio-economic, cultural, legal and other factors. The Ukrainian delegation welcomed the steps taken by the human rights treaty bodies in addressing that serious issue, and wished to stress that trafficking was a regional and global phenomenon that could not be effectively tackled at the national level alone. Cooperation was also needed at the bilateral and multilateral levels. Ukraine was ready to enhance such cooperation and called on the relevant United Nations bodies to consider appropriate ways of providing assistance.

100. Ukraine had signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Parliament was currently considering its ratification. In June 2002, Ukraine had presented its combined fourth and fifth periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The conclusions and recommendations made by the Committee's experts were being studied by the relevant government agencies. As a result of progress made in improving the working methods of the Committee, the consideration of periodic reports now provided an opportunity for an active dialogue with States. Ukraine welcomed the new reporting guidelines and strategy to encourage States to submit overdue reports, as well as the modified format for the Committee's concluding comments. It was also important to eliminate the backlog in the consideration of reports.

101. The delegation of Ukraine wished to mention that it had hosted the Forum on Cooperation between Women, organized by the Georgia, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova (GUUAM) Group.

102. **Ms. Ahmed** (Sudan), citing the difficulty involved in establishing a single norm applicable to all societies, drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/57/286, which referred to General Assembly resolution 56/156, stressing tolerance and respect for cultural diversity.

103. In spite of the efforts made by Governments, civil society and non-governmental organizations, many gaps remained. While the implementation of decisions adopted at the Beijing Conference was incumbent on Governments, there was no doubt that international cooperation was crucial. Developing countries, and in particular the least developed countries, continued to confront considerable hardship in spite of agreements concluded and decisions taken. Debt and debt servicing diverted resources which could be used to provide social services to their people. Unilaterally adopted economic sanctions were an additional impediment. Decisions taken at the international level were

therefore indispensable in ensuring the integration of countries negatively affected by globalization, otherwise those countries would be marginalized, which would have negative repercussions, particularly for women and children.

104. The Division for the Advancement of Women should ensure that future reports examined the degree of progress achieved in poverty eradication and violence, especially the exploitation of women and girls through prostitution.

105. The Sudanese delegation thanked the Working Group for its recommendations on the future of INSTRAW (A/57/330). It further supported the conclusion that the Institute could play a useful role and should therefore continue to operate, but that in order to do so, it would need to reactivate its work and should be provided with adequate resources.

106. With respect to the report of the Secretary-General contained in A/57/170, Sudan believed that international organizations should exert further efforts to combat trafficking in women and girls who were exploited for pornography and prostitution, and try to dismantle prostitution networks, penalize such practices and strengthen the implementation of regional and international conventions. The situation of women who were victims of armed conflict and living under foreign occupation, such as in Palestine, should also be addressed.

107. Finally, Sudan called for greater support for the conventional family structure to ensure the stability of societies in raising future generations, and called for an end to cultural arrogance which led some cultures to consider themselves superior to others.

108. **Mr. Tamir** (Israel) said that his country, strongly believing that the pursuit of gender equality should be one of the cornerstones of every nation, had over the past few years taken several institutional and legislative steps aimed at enhancing the status of women. The Golda Meir Mount Carmel Training Centre Haifa had been established in 1961 within the framework of the Centre for International Cooperation for just that purpose: to train women and promote their role in development.

109. Since the Beijing Conference, there had been a marked improvement in the status of women in Israel and their role in the political sphere. There were three female ministers and 16 women among the 120 members of the Knesset. All women members of the Knesset were on the Committee for the Advancement of the Status of Women.

110. To address the recurring problem of violence against women, in the past five years Israel had launched awareness-raising campaigns and passed new legislation to protect women from all types of physical and psychological violence. It had created 14 shelters and 50 prevention centres scattered throughout the country, which were funded entirely by the Government.

111. The principle of equality for all citizens had been given legal force by the passage of the Equal Rights for Women Act, which guaranteed civil and political equality between the sexes. Israel had also ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

112. Because achieving gender equality was a problem that society as a whole must resolve, the Government had created the Authority for the Advancement of Women under the auspices of the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministerial Committee for the Advancement of the Status of Women. With regard to the issue of trafficking in women and girls addressed by the Secretary-General in his report A/57/170, in July 2000 Israel had adopted a law prohibiting trafficking in persons for the purpose of prostitution, which gave expression to the determination of the Israeli Government to combat the scourge through law enforcement and jurisprudence. Its efforts could be enhanced through greater cooperation with neighbouring countries. Women subjected to trafficking were viewed as victims rather than criminals, even though the majority of them were in Israel illegally; Israel encouraged them to lodge complaints against traffickers, and those who agreed to testify were not arrested but were offered shelter and assistance.

113. **Mr. Olhaye** (Djibouti), noting that it was the responsibility of the international community to advance the status of women, said that it was fortunate that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, soon to mark its twenty-fifth anniversary, was in existence. However, it was regrettable that the target date of 2000 for its universal ratification had not been met, that many countries had formulated reservations and that the

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had not been able to consider all the complaints submitted. It was to be hoped that the Committee could fill those gaps.

114. There had been a number of major meetings and outcome documents devoted to the status of women, in addition to which Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the various conferences on human rights issues should be mentioned. He would like to stress, however, that the critical issues facing the international community were all heavily intertwined with those regarding women.

115. In much of the developing world and certainly in the least developed countries, poverty would seem to be at the root of all problems. The negative effects of globalization and various economic measures made the Governments of such countries powerless to address the problems of women. In addition to discrimination and disparities in employment, education and health services, women also suffered from the effects of armed conflict, foreign occupation and terrorism.

116. Violence against women, which the World Health Organization had found was closely associated with poverty, remained a serious concern. Equally disturbing was the trafficking in persons, some 200,000 every year, the majority of them women and children. Conflicts tended to exacerbate such trafficking — yet another reason to prevent them. The Government of Djibouti therefore supported the recommendation of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance that the General Assembly should declare a United Nations year against trafficking in persons.

117. His delegation wished to emphasize the omnipresence of the threat of HIV/AIDS, which could not be ignored in any discussion on development, poverty or social issues.

118. It also reaffirmed the relevance of the main issues identified by the Millennium Declaration and the key importance of women's participation in development, since poverty eradication and women's empowerment went hand in hand.

119. **Ms. Sandler** (United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)) said that the series of United Nations conferences held over the past 10 years, at which Member States had committed themselves to a set of norms and values underpinning the Millennium Development Goals adopted in September 2000, along with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) had stressed that development and global security required the involvement of all countries and all people and that the participation of those most deeply concerned was indispensable if lasting solutions were to be found to the world's major problems. As the note of the Secretary-General in document A/57/125 had indicated, human development and global security and the quest for a world free of violence were at the heart of all UNIFEM programmes.

120. In Afghanistan, UNIFEM supported the efforts of the Ministry of Women's Affairs to broaden women's participation in all aspects of reconstruction throughout the country and to facilitate the development of a national women's agenda. In the southern Caucasus, it was coordinating a project aimed at developing local peace-building capacity in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Working with the Facilitator of the inter-Congolese dialogue, UNIFEM had facilitated the meeting in Sun City, South Africa, of 40 Congolese women representing the Government, opposition parties and civil society.

121. Eliminating the multiple forms of violence that women and girls faced remained a high priority for UNIFEM. To combat the growing traffic in women and girls and crimes of honour committed against women, the UNIFEM Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence against Women was supporting community-based initiatives and working with traditional and spiritual leaders, families and communities to change attitudes and beliefs.

122. With the support of the Japanese Human Security Fund and a growing partnership with the Joint United Nations Programme on AIDS and the United Nations Population Fund, UNIFEM was working to combat the growing threat to women and girls from the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The programme "Gender-Focused Responses to Address the Challenges of HIV/AIDS", launched in 1998, had been expanded in Asia and Africa, with pilot projects in China, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Swaziland and Cambodia.

123. As women linked respect for their social and economic rights to ideas about human security, UNIFEM was helping them to understand at least the broad outlines of economic life and policy. Long-term efforts of that kind should result in broad-based

dialogue on policy and on human development and global security.

124. In 2000 UNIFEM had decided to have independent experts do an assessment of the impact of war upon women. A team of experts had travelled to various conflict areas, and their findings would be presented to the Security Council in October 2002. They would be testifying to the fact that women and children were being particularly targeted as victims, and that women were working persistently to bring about an end to conflicts, both national and global.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.